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# CHAIR'S BLOG

January 2021

The month of January is the start of a new beginning as businesses emerge from the dark days of 2020 with hope and enthusiasm for a better 2021.

More than anything, businesses want to get back to growing the economy by taking care of their business and their families. To this end, the Chamber will continue to voice our concerns to the Provincial Government regarding the current COVID-19 restrictions and the negative impacts these restrictions are continuing to have on our business community.

Having such strict measures in place province-wide puts smaller population densities and areas with lower confirmed COVID-19 cases at a disadvantage. We need a common-sense approach to reviving the economy while balancing the health and safety of our community.

Based on a recent survey with businesses in our region by the Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce, over 80% of respondents have stated that their business has been negatively impacted by the restrictions, with 69% stating they would like actions to reduce the current restrictions. We know that these businesses have poured their life savings and energy to try and make it through the pandemic. Although government support programs have been a temporary relief, they do not make up for the costs endured and the ongoing uncertainty and lack of clarity these businesses are faced with.

If you are experiencing difficulty or hardships, please reach out to the Chamber, we are here to assist you.

Our Chamber colleagues in Saint John, have started a Remote Worker Attraction Program, and there are articles and discussion threads all over the internet and social media platforms such as LinkedIn about how the pandemic has shifted the commercial office space demand forever. Companies all over the world are committing to allow their staff to work remotely full-time, or a few days a week, and with this, they are also committing to downsizing their offices to reflect the number of people they will have in their building each day. In greater metropolitan areas all across Canada, the real estate markets have seen people flee the city and head to suburbia. This poses the question of whether there will be a shift in demand for office space. This provides an opportunity for Parkland County to capitalize on this movement and attract businesses and residents to our region.

For certain, change is inevitable. In keeping with one of our value statements, continuous improvement, we are preparing for our AGM on March 4th where we will review and approve our 2021 Business Plan and operating budget. As well, nominations for Board of Director positions are open and we encourage you to lend your voice to Alberta's 4th largest Chamber of Commerce. Please visit our website for more information.

It has been my honour and pleasure to be the Chair of the GPRC for the inaugural year 2020, and I am very confident that the new Board and capable management team, will continue to build on the foundation we have established for the benefit of our members and our community.

Keep well, stay safe and be kind to one another!

Richard Wong

Chair, Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce

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